

# Dual area codes coming to Wasatch Front

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SALT LAKE CITY -- By next June, when new phone lines will exhaust the 801 area code, Utah's heavily populated Wasatch Front will get a new area code.

The 385 area code will be assigned to new phone numbers inside the five-county region already covered by the 801 area code. People with 801 numbers will get to keep them.

But giving the same region two area codes means that everybody, no matter where they are calling inside the Wasatch Front, will have to dial 10 instead of seven digits for a local call -- even to a neighbor across the street.

It also means that phone directories will start listing all numbers in a 10-digit format. People won't have to dial '1' to call from one area code to the other.

In approving the plan Thursday, the Utah Public Service Commission reversed an earlier decision to split the region into different area codes.

The "doughnut" option -- with Salt Lake keeping 801 and surrounding counties getting 385 -- would have caused more disruption and still required a fair amount of 10-digit dialing for calls to other counties, the commission said.

Businesses said they would have lost some confused customers.

Denver, Phoenix and other metropolitan areas already use multiple area codes inside their regions, Qwest Communications spokesman Gary Younger said Friday.

"This is not a unique situation," he said. "Overlays are better for consumers and businesses over splits, because split regions may need to be split again."

The Public Service Commission said people are less dependent on pushing numbers to place calls, using phones that can be programmed to dial themselves or automatically run 10 digits when users dial only seven.

There are no changes for the rest of Utah, which is covered by the 435 area code.

The U.S. will run out of 10-digit phone numbers by 2036 and will have to start switching to 12-digit numbers, said Joe Cocke, a planner with the North American Numbering Plan Administrator, which manages area codes for the federal government.

Cocke said each area code has 7.9 million numbering possibilities, many held in reserve or dedicated for official or testing purposes. It wasn't immediately clear how many numbers were being used under the 801 area code.

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